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Continuing with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda's delineation on the twenty-six qualities of a devotee, in this article from *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* (Vol.20, Issue 8) published in 1917, Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains the quality of *śuci*, or cleanliness, in a devotee and concludes that only a devotee can truly be clean and pure and what is true conception of purity

—By Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura Prabhūpāda

The conception of purity (*śuci*) varies greatly depending on one's *ruci* (inclination). What one considers pure, another might deem impure. The materialist, driven by desires other than to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (*anyābhilāṣī*), may perceive something as sacred, yet a devotee of Bhagavān does not recognize it as such.

What a *karmī* regards as pure is often far from being pure in the eyes of the saintly devotees. Similarly, the so-called *śuci* of an *ahaṅgrahopāśaka* (one who worships the self as non-different from the impersonal Brahman) is considered *aśuci* (impure) by the *sajjana* (saintly) devotees. The norms of purity prescribed by the *karma* and *jñāna śāstras* do not compel the saintly devotees (*sādhus*) to accept them as absolute.

The devotees say—That place where *hari-kathā* is absent is inherently impure. That time in which the service of Śrī Hari is neglected is inauspicious and polluted. That person who turns away from the practices of devotional service (*bhajana*) is, by nature, impure. The *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Vedas* are celebrated as supremely sacred scriptures. Why? Because their beginning, middle, and end are imbued with the glorification of Śrī Hari. Their sanctity arises from their essence—*hari-kathā*. True *śuci* is thus inseparably linked with Śrī Hari and His glorification. Where His name is sung, where His qualities are discussed, where His service is rendered—there, and only there, is purity found.

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The saintly sages declare—That place where *hari-kathā* is not respected is inherently impure. Bhagavān alone is the sole foundation of purity. Any subject devoid of connection to Hari and where there are no discourses about Bhagavān, by nature, that place is impure. From a material perspective, the *karmīs* perceive water, fire, and the sun as pure. However, in the absence of a connection to Śrī Hari, these can never be truly considered pure.” [Note—Purity is not an inherent quality of objects or elements in the material realm; rather, it is determined by their relationship with Bhagavān.]

ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਭਗਵਾਨ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਪੁਰਤਾਪ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ—ਜਿਸ ਥਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਹਰਿ-ਕਥਾ ਨੂੰ ਮਹੱਤਵ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ, ਉਹ ਥਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਵਿਚ ਪੁਰਤਾਪਹੀਨ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਭਗਵਾਨ ਹੀ ਪੁਰਤਾਪ ਦਾ ਆਧਾਰ ਹਨ। ਕਿਸੇ ਵਿਸ਼ੈ ਵਿਚ ਭਗਵਾਨ ਨਾਲ ਕੋਈ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਵਿਸ਼ੈ ਵਿਚ ਭਗਵਾਨ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੋਈ ਗੱਲ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ, ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਉਹ ਥਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਵਿਚ ਪੁਰਤਾਪਹੀਨ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਮਾਟੀ ਦੇ ਥਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਪੁਰਤਾਪ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋਣਾ ਅਸੰਭਵ ਹੈ। ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੇ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਪੁਰਤਾਪ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਥਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਹਰਿ-ਕਥਾ ਨੂੰ ਮਹੱਤਵ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ, ਉਹ ਥਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਵਿਚ ਪੁਰਤਾਪਹੀਨ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਭਗਵਾਨ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਪੁਰਤਾਪ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ।

The *sajjana* (saintly devotees) further assert—Every object devoid of a connection to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is impure. Kṛṣṇa is the center of all purity, and only those devoted to Him are truly pure. Objects related to Kṛṣṇa are sacred, while those lacking such a connection are impure. In worldly dealings, notions of purity and impurity based on caste (*varṇa*) or social customs are temporary and circumstantial. However, the conception of purity held by Vaiṣṇavas is rooted in eternal principles and conduct of cleanliness (*nitya-śaucācāra*), which are imbued with the essence of eternal well-being (*nitya-kalyāṇa*).